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In The Claims:

Cancel all of the claims, 1 through 20, and substitute new claims 21-38 as follows.

NEW CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

21. (NEW) In a method for making filter elements comprising mixing activated carbon material and polymeric binder; extruding the mixture at a predetermined velocity through an extruder barrel wherein the mixture is heated to a temperature above the softening point of at least some of the polymeric binder and molded into a porous element; and then cooling said porous element to a temperature below the melting point of the polymeric binder; the improvement comprising manipulating the porous element as it is being formed while it is passed through the extruder barrel whereby to cause an increased porosity of the porous element.

22. (NEW) The method for making filter elements of claim 21, wherein the increased porosity is greatest at the outer periphery of the porous element resulting in an increasing density across a cross-section of the porous element in a direction from the periphery thereof to the center of the structure.

23. (NEW) The method of claim 21 wherein at least some of the polymeric binder is introduced in the form of fibers.

24. (NEW) The method of claim 21 wherein the activated carbon is granular and in a first step the granular activated carbon and the polymeric binder are mixed with intensive agitation.

25. (NEW) The method of claim 24 wherein activated carbon fibers are introduced after the intensive agitation and the resulting admixture is thereafter further mixed with less vigorous agitation.

26. (NEW) The method of claim 22 wherein the porosity of the porous element is variably increased by moving it forward using a predetermined screw rotation velocity in the extruder barrel, and then passing the porous element through an extrusion head having a mandrel which operates at a rotation velocity lower than the screw rotation velocity.

27. (NEW) The method of claim 26 wherein the mandrel rotation velocity is from 0.001-0.99 times the screw rotation velocity.

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28. (NEW) The method of claim 21 wherein the polymeric binder is introduced in the form of a mixture of fibrous polymers.

29. (NEW) The method of claim 28 wherein the polymeric binder is a mixture of fibrous polymers of at least two different polymeric compositions, with the melting point of one type of polymer differing by at least 10°C from the melting point of the other.

30. (NEW) The method of claim 21 wherein the polymeric binder is introduced in the form of a mixture of powdered and fibrous polymers.

31. (NEW) The method of claim 30 wherein the melting point of the powdered polymer is lower than the melting point of the fibrous polymer.

32. (NEW) The method of claim 21 wherein the polymeric binder comprises a material selected from the group consisting of polypropylene fibers, polyethylene fibers and polyamide fibers.

33. (NEW) A method of claim 32 specified by the use of fibrous polymeric binder having an average fiber length of about 5 to 20 times the average fiber diameter.

34. (NEW) The method of claim 21 wherein the activated carbon comprises fibers having an average length of about 2 to 100 times the average fiber diameter.

35. (NEW) The method of claim 21 wherein the porous element has minimum hydraulic resistance.

36. (NEW) The method of claim 22 wherein the porous element has minimum hydraulic resistance.

37. (NEW) A porous element formed by the method of claim 21.

38. (NEW) A porous element formed by the method of claim 22.